

16 March 2010

Executive Member for Children & Young People's Services

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

'Me Too' Activity Subsidy – Report on Progress

Summary

1. This report seeks to update the Executive Member on the progress of the 'Me Too' Activity Subsidy pilot and sets out plans for a city-wide roll out. "Me Too" is the local branding of the funds known nationally (and previously reported to the Executive Member) as "Extended Schools Disadvantage Subsidy Funding".

Background

2. A new stream of government funding is now available to pass on directly to schools; its purpose is to support the 'Narrowing the Gap' and 'Improved Well-being' agendas. It is part of the government's commitment to Extended Services, and complements the core offer objective of schools providing access to a comprehensive range of exciting, high quality out of school activities. The subsidy helps to ensure that these activities are accessible to all. It focuses particularly on those children and young people who are disadvantaged by economic circumstances, defined initially as those that are eligible for Free School Meals and those in care. The subsidy – which we have branded locally as 'Me Too' - provides disadvantaged children and young people with the opportunity to take part in around 2 hours of Extended Activities per week during term time, and 30 hours over the school holidays, free of charge or at a greatly reduced rate.
3. Research shows that high quality out of school activities can help improve well being and raise standards of achievement, as well as narrowing the gap in attainment. Positive relationships with low income families can be created, strengthening their engagement with schools and the wider Extended Services core offer.
4. The expected benefits for those involved are: increased self-esteem, confidence and independence; increased aspirations; taking responsibility for themselves; development of social and life skills; and

the possibility of finding inspiration in discovering a talent they might otherwise have never known they had.

5. A pilot cluster of schools in the Acomb area (Westfield, Hob Moor, Woodthorpe and York High) has been working in partnership since last summer to deliver 'Me Too' and to prepare for the sharing of learning with other schools for city wide roll out.
6. The amount of funding agreed for York in Year 1 (09/10) was £82k. This increases significantly in Year 2 (2010/11) to £446k and is to be used by all schools, working on a cluster basis, for the same purpose.

Progress of the 'Me Too' Pilot

7. The pilot cluster has taken full advantage of the 'Schools Out' Programme and has made links to other offers for children including the cultural offer, the Five Hour Sports Offer, Find Your Talent, Youth Offer, short breaks, libraries, Aiming High for Disabled Children and Parenting. As a result, a broad range of activities has been made available using this funding: for example, cooking, residential visits, climbing, football, breakdancing, drumming, rollerblading, drum sessions, music lessons, swimming, and school trips. York High has also offered taster sessions to older primary school children, and has invited families of all children within the cluster to their family learning days.
8. Take-up has increased slowly over the last few months but it varies from school to school. In the initial stages, time was spent in setting up processes and consulting with the target group, which is important to secure the engagement of children and young people, sustain their interest and to do this in a sensitive and discrete way. Although final figures will not be available until after the end of the financial year, it is already clear that (in common with many other authorities) we will only have spent a proportion of the funds available to us in the pilot year (perhaps around 30%). We have ascertained that unspent funds can be rolled over to 2010-11. Despite the limited take-up to date, Annex 1 contains many examples of where the use of this funding has already had a significant impact.
9. Partly because of the lower-than-expected take-up, we agreed that the pilot cluster would explore other indicators of economic disadvantage as possible ways of including other children and young people who would benefit from accessing 'Me Too'. In addition to eligibility for Free School Meals and Looked After children, the target group has now been expanded to also include children and young people who are:
 - Young Carers;
 - Living in Temporary Accommodation;
 - Children in Need – receiving statutory services;
 - and those who have an active Common Assessment (ie. judged to be vulnerable to poor longer term outcomes).

10. Pupils who meet at least one of these local criteria will be referred to as the 'target group' for 'Me Too' funding. In exceptional circumstances Headteachers have also had the discretion to allocate funding where they are aware of other economic circumstances within a family that would make paying for activities difficult.
11. The pilot cluster has reported that although it is a challenge to engage particular children and sustain their involvement, overall there is increased engagement between the families of the target group and the school. They have also found that monitoring and evaluating pupils' participation in activities has played an important role in maximising the benefits of the subsidy. In order to contribute to measuring and evaluating impact, schools will be expected to keep data on the eligible group, their take up of activities, costs, and feedback on the impact on the pupil from a range of perspectives. The work of the pilot cluster will save others schools from having to reinvent the wheel in this respect; however, it is worth registering that schools have some concerns about the administrative burden that the subsidy represents, given that we are not allowed to top-slice any element of it for support costs.

Plans for City-Wide Roll Out

12. The Training and Development Agency (TDA) has been supporting the local authority in delivering 'Me Too' and preparing for city-wide roll out. They are confident that York is delivering as expected and that effective planning has been put in place for the full roll-out.
13. The Extended Services Unit has kept Headteachers up-to-date about 'Me Too' and is preparing a more detailed package of support for schools, to maximise the opportunities for using the funding as quickly as possible, and to minimise the administrative burden referred to above. The Unit is also briefing activity providers, agencies, support officers and school staff. Other plans include:
 - Working with activity providers across the city to ensure full engagement with 'Me Too' and to maintain discreet ways of accessing activities by the eligible group so as to avoid stigma. Agencies/providers are also being provided with guidance on giving early notice of children and young people with complex needs who will attend activities, to ensure the provider is adequately prepared to meet their needs within the setting.
 - Briefing professionals and agencies such as Family Intervention Workers, Education Social workers, Connexion workers, etc, who are able to influence and engage the target group, and other networks involved with these to support the promotion and implementation of 'Me Too'.

- Advice and guidance to school staff on administering 'Me Too' at a detailed operational level. All documentation and guidance will be made available on the YorOK Website.
 - Preparation of marketing materials such as fact sheets and posters – an example briefing note is attached.
 - Preparation of templates for schools to monitor take-up and impact on the eligible group.
 - Highlighting to Headteachers the forward planning that has to be done by their individual schools in terms of incorporating 'Me Too' into School Improvement Plans, Self Evaluations Forms, and the need to work in collaboration to achieve roll-out in the most effective and efficient way.
14. It is intended that delivery of activities is achieved through clusters based on School Sports Partnerships as these are well embedded across the city and mean that sporting activities, which form the largest part of Me Too, are offered in the most effective and efficient means possible.

Consultation

15. A key guiding principle of 'Me Too' is that schools must consult with pupils to ascertain activities that the target group and the school population in general would like to have available. Such consultation should then identify any unmet needs and barriers to participation, with a view to commissioning new services where this is appropriate. As part of delivering Extended Services and Every Child Matters, schools should already be carrying out on-going consultation and evaluation, and therefore the work for 'Me Too' will build on feedback already available to them.

Options

16. As this report is for information, no options are appropriate.

Analysis

17. Analysis is included within the main body of the report

Corporate Priorities

18. This work will contribute to the corporate objectives around Learning City, Healthy City, Inclusive City and City of Culture, through its focus on equality of access and improved outcomes, for all of our citizens.

Implications

19. (a) **Financial** – There are no implications for existing budgets. Additional grant funding of £446k in 2010/11 will be available through the Standards Fund from the DCSF and will be devolved to schools, including Danesgate; this money must be used for provision of activities, removing barriers to access, and commissioning of new activities.
- (b) **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no direct implications on posts at this time, as the grant funding is specifically for provision/commissioning of new activities and cannot be top sliced for any other purpose such as additional posts, administration, etc. The city-wide roll out will run using existing budgets within the Extended Services Unit and the schools concerned.

There are no other implications.

Risk Management

20. The risks associated with 'Me Too' are acceptable. The Extended Services Unit is supporting schools in the implementation of 'Me Too', with additional input from the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA), and practical support and guidance from the pathfinder authorities who have already fully rolled out this subsidy. There is clearly a risk that not all of the available fund will be taken up; this is, however, a national issue. At this stage it would be reasonable to assume that there will be no further funds available beyond April 2011.

Recommendations

21. The Executive Member is asked to note the contents of this report, the plans for rolling out the "Me Too" subsidy across the whole city and that delivery will be achieved through clusters based on Schools Sports Partnerships.

Reason: To ensure that York is well placed to take advantage of the Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy funding.

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Wards Affected: <i>List wards or tick box to indicate all</i>				All	√
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Background Papers:

Information Item to Decision Session – Executive member for Learning,
Culture and Children’s Services 8th September 2009

Annex: Annex 1. ‘Me Too’ Briefing Note